

From statistical discrimination to positive discrimination

Remarks on probabilistic inference

Maxime Parodi

Statistical discrimination is the rejection of an individual because of some defects – observed or believed – on the aggregate characteristics of his group. Unlike negative discrimination, the rejection does not rely on prejudice or racial or gender bias, but on a probabilistic inference about some decisive characteristic. It is a rational motive, but this rational does not say the entire story: to reject supposes not only to evaluate probabilities, but also to choose some risks and this cannot be done without practical considerations. The rationality of discrimination lies then on a context-dependant reasoning which could not be underestimated. It appears then that the lack of individual information could also justify a reasonable bet like positive discrimination or affirmative action.

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